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RIDER REPORTED FACTORS INFLUENCING CHOICE OF STIRRUP LENGTH IN DRESSAGE, SHOWJUMPING, EVENTING, AND PARA EQUESTRIANISM

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Introduction

The criteria upon which riders base their choice of stirrup length for different sports does not appear to have been reported.

This study was designed to investigate the factors that influence a rider's choice of stirrup length for different equestrian disciplines: dressage, showjumping, eventing and para-equestrianism.



Results

- **2183** participants; the majority were female (97%; n=**2131**).
- 8% (n=**184**) categorised themselves as para-equestrians.
- Most respondents (n=**1200**) identified themselves as dressage riders (amateur: 89%, n=**1068**; professional: 11%, n=**132**)
- **665** riders engaged in showjumping (amateur: 87%, n=**579**; professional: 13%, n=**86**)
- **393** riders selected eventing as their primary discipline (amateur: 89%, n= **350**; professional: 11%, n=**43**).
- All riders consistently ranked **feel of stirrups** once mounted, **how stable** stirrups feel once moving and **type of saddle** being used as the three most important factors when deciding stirrup length across the disciplines.
- Dressage riders were more greatly influenced by **extrinsic** factors investigated when setting stirrup length than either showjumping or event riders (Kruskal Wallis: $P < 0.04$).
- For eventing participants, **exercise type**, **safety**, **saddle type** and rider **stability** were key factors influencing stirrup length selection between different phases of the competition. These factors were generally ranked as more important for the dressage / flatwork phase compared to showjumping or cross country schooling (Kruskal Wallis: $P < 0.01$).

References

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Method

- Online questionnaire distributed on various social media groups on Facebook ®
- Questions were designed as 5-point Likert scales asked 28 questions related to factors which anecdotally have been linked to rider selection of stirrup length to ascertain strength of influence from no influence up to very strong influence (including "no opinion/ don't know").
- The survey was live for 12 days and 97% (n=2117) of responses were obtained within the first 8 days.

Limitations

- The majority of respondents were **female** and therefore may be biased and not reflective male riders' perspectives.
- It should also be noted that most respondents classified themselves as **amateur** riders, therefore the results cannot be considered to fully represent the views of professional riders.
- Further research testing how riders, across disciplines and status, select their stirrup length in practice to support the views presented here is warranted.

Conclusions

- Regardless of discipline, riders consistently ranked feel of stirrups once mounted, how stable stirrups feel once moving and type of saddle being used as the three most influential factors when choosing stirrup length.
- Dressage riders were influenced more by extrinsic factors when selecting stirrup length than showjumping or event riders.
- Stirrup length is likely to affect rider comfort, performance and safety, while having relatively less effect on the horse's well-being, therefore it is not surprising that riders from all disciplines placed high emphasis on factors related to the rider and saddle

